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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0262

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BASRAH 000019

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/15/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: VEILED HYPOCRISY: BASRAH PROVINCIAL COUNCIL VOTES TO
BOYCOTT BRITS AND DANES

REF: (A) BASRAH 10, (B) BASRAH 12, (C) BASRAH 13, (D) BASRAH 14, (E) BASRAH 15, (F) BASRAH 17, (G) BASRAH 18

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,
Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: On February 13, the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) unanimously voted to suspend communication and cooperation with British and Danish officials in Basrah. The decision was officially issued on February 14 and delivered to the British and Danish missions in Basrah on February 15. The letter demands that the Danish government issue an official apology to all Muslims in the world because of the cartoon scandal, Danish forces not circulate in Basrah, and the Director of the Danish Office in Basrah depart within 72 hours if there is no apology. The letter continues the boycott of the British for the alleged videotaped abuse of Iraqi youth and the arrest of 11 Iraqi policemen on January 23. The boycott does not extend to U.S. officials. This suspension of cooperation with Coalition partners is likely political maneuvering on the part of the increasingly dysfunctional BPC to shift attention away from its own poor performance and to secure the release of the detainees. End Summary.

Unified Front, Internal Divisions

[2](#). (C) On February 13, the BPC voted officially to suspend communication and cooperation with British and Danish officials in Basrah. (See Refs for background on the boycott.) The boycott, although supported by all BPC members, is spearheaded by a few extremists on the BPC and by Khazl Jaloob Falih Abu Salam (Fadillah) in particular. As Basrah Governor Mohammed Mosabeh Mohammed Al Wa'ili continues to lose support, Abu Salam has increasingly taken on a leadership role in the Basrah PC. Moderate Ghali Najam Muter (Iraqi National Accord) initially supported continuing dialogue with the British and Danish, but backed down rather than face the ire of other BPC members.

What the Letter Said

[3](#). (C) The BPC issued an official statement (Number 606, dated February 14, 2006) in which it declared an official decision (Number 99, made during BPC session number 61) to impose a boycott on the Danish forces present in Basrah and to continue the boycott of the British forces. This letter was delivered to the Danish and British Offices in Basrah on February 15. A translation of the letter is as follows:

"First: A boycott with the Danish Forces due to what the Danish press has printed insulting the Prophet Mohammed. We are asking the forces not to go in or around the city; also for the Director of the Danish Regional Embassy Office to depart within 72 hours from the date of this decision's issuance, unless the Danish Government provides an official apology to all Muslims around the world.

Second: To continue the boycott with the British Forces because of their non-compliance with the Council's decision regarding their random arrests and raids, as well as their insults to our citizens by the forces on broadcast satellite television.

Third: All sectors/departments will comply with the boycott with the above-mentioned forces and not cooperate with them for any reason, unless directed by the Council. In case of non-compliance with the decision, the Council will do all

necessary procedures to remove the non-complier from their position of employment."

Danish and British Reactions

14. (C) The Senior Legal Advisor at the Danish Office in Basrah told IPAQ that he believed the British videotape issue triggered the boycott against the Danish office. He said that the Danish office will not attempt to engage BPC members and is deferring action on the boycott issue to the national level through its embassy in Baghdad. The current Director of the Danish Office is outside of Iraq until February 21. Danish Office staff in Basrah have received no personal physical threats and have no plans to evacuate. Because of the BPC letter, Danish military forces are not moving out of their base.

15. (U) The British Consul General issued a televised press release on February 14 in Basrah in which he made the following remarks:

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"It is unfortunate that the Provincial Council has decided to suspend co-operation with us. This will only harm the people of Basrah. Our work supporting reconstruction and security in Basrah will continue. However, we will be able to achieve more with the co-operation of the Provincial Council. The British forces are here in accordance with the decision of the UN Security Council and at the request of the Iraqi government. We are here to support security and reconstruction.

Concerning the video tape which was aired by some satellite channels of the maltreatment of some Iraqis by a very few British soldiers, the Prime Minister and the British Government take this very seriously and the PM has announced that an immediate and full investigation will take place."

Protestors and Retaliation

16. (C) On February 14, about 300 protestors gathered outside the gate to the British Consulate in Basrah. The protest lasted about one hour. No one was hurt or injured during the protest, and police personnel escorted the protestors. Protestors burned a British flag and chanted that the British should be punished for their crimes and should leave Iraq. A large red and white Danish flag has been chalked onto the streets outside the building of the Office of the Martry Sadr (OMS) political party in Basrah so that traffic passes over the top of it, an effort to retaliate against the perceived insult of the Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed.

Little Will to Resolve the Conflict through Dialogue

17. (C) In a February 14 meeting on an unrelated matter, the Basrah Archbishop Gabriel Kassab told the Basrah Deputy Regional Coordinator (DRC) that he had last met with Basrah Governor Mohammed about ten days previously, and that he had advised the governor that those arrested for attacks on Coalition forces must be held accountable for their crimes. He said that the governor had not agreed with him and that he believed the reason for his disagreement was because the detainees were "his people." Archbishop Kassab said that he had attempted to mediate between the members of the BPC advocating a boycott against the British and Danish and those who wished to continue dialogue, but that neither side was interested in reaching an agreement. They only "pretended" to talk to each other.

18. (C) Archbishop Kassab identified Abu Salam as one of the primary personalities behind the decision to boycott the British and the Danish. "Now Abu Salam is the Governor," he said, alluding to the diminishing role of Governor Mohamed as a political leader in Basrah. The Archbishop looked both ways before telling the DRC that cursing the presence of the British and Americans in Basrah has become a way to assert patriotism, but that everyone secretly likes and supports the Coalition presence in the south.

19. (C) The Archbishop, whose professional relationship with the Basrah Governor precedes MNFI engagement and whose survival in the overwhelmingly Shia south has depended on his adroitness as a minority figurehead, confessed that he was concerned by the current in-fighting among the political parties in Basrah. Each party, he said, is concerned only with its own members, and none of the parties are directing attention to the needs of the people. "I would make each person in Basrah a saint," he said, alluding to the degree of suffering endured by Basrah's residents while political leaders squabble. When asked if he thought the Basrah governor would be re-elected, the Archbishop replied that he had been surprised Mohamed had ever been elected governor in the first place, so he did not feel comfortable

trying to predict the outcome of the next election.

10. (C) Comment: The Basrah PC has become increasingly dysfunctional over the past months as political in-fighting reigns. Its predilection to suspend communication with Coalition partners and to determine Coalition presence as a means of achieving its goals is a disturbing trend of a provincial government usurping national authority. Little progress has been made by the Reconstruction and Development Committee on implementing and funding projects, and it is becoming increasingly likely that the Basrah local government will not be able to allocate funds, either from the donor community or from Baghdad, for the benefit of Basrah's residents before provincial elections. It should come as no surprise that there appears to be no will to resolve the conflict through dialogue. The resumption of relations without official apologies from the British and Danish governments would rob the Basrah

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Provincial Council of a much-needed political victory. The BPC is using the current political crisis as a means to divert public attention from its own lack of accomplishments and the illegal activities of some of its members. The current impasse is unlikely to be resolved without the active engagement of the Baghdad government. End comment.

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